

REMARKS

Claims 1-42 are currently pending in the Application.

By this amendment, claims 1 and 21 are amended, and claims 41 and 42 added. No new matter is involved. Reconsideration of this Application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Personal Interview

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the courtesies extended by Examiner Nguyen to Mr. Robert J. Webster, their below-named representative during the personal interview conducted on April 24, 2005, and to Examiner Hjerpe, Examiner Nguyen's Supervisor, subsequent to the personal interview in a telephone discussion later the same day.

Moreover, Examiner Nguyen indicated, in a telephone conversation dated April 26, 2006, that he and Examiner Hjerpe determined that the subject matter presented in amended claims 1 and 21 and in new claims 41 and 42 patentably defines over the applied art.

Claim rejections under 35 USC §103(a)

Claims 1-40 stand rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over newly cited U.S. patent 5,817,556 to Katayama in view of U.S. Patent 6,480,202 to Deguchi. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Applicants respectfully submit that this rejection is improper and should be withdrawn because Katayama neither discloses nor suggests the features recited in amended claims 1, from which claims 2-20 depend, or in amended claim 21, from which claims 22-40 depend, for reasons discussing during the aforementioned interviews, with which Examiners Nguyen and Hjerpe have indicated their agreement.

Moreover, Applicants respectfully submit the Office Action has not made out a *prima facie* case of proper motivation to modify Katayama in view of DeGuchi, as suggested, or otherwise made out a *prima facie* case of obviousness of the claimed invention based on Katayama in view of DeGuchi at least for reasons discussed during the aforementioned interviews, with which Examiners Nguyen and Hjerpe have indicated their agreement.

Accordingly, the rejections of claims 1-40 fail to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness of the claimed invention by Katayama in view of Deguchi.

Thus, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 1-40.

New Claims

Claims 41 and 42 have been added. Applicants respectfully submit that new claims 41 and 42 positively recite a combination of features which is neither disclosed nor rendered obvious by Katayama or Deguchi, either alone

or in combination. Moreover, Examiners Nguyen and Hjerpe have indicated in the aforementioned interviews that they agree with this conclusion.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that claims 41 and 42 patentably define over the applied art and should be allowed.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully request that this Reply under 37 C.F.R. §1.111 be favorably by the Examiner and deemed to place the Application in condition for Allowance. In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants submit the claimed invention is not anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore respectfully request reconsideration of this Application by the Examiner, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Robert J. Webster (Reg. No. 46,472) at the telephone number below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.


Respectfully submitted,

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